

## THE DISPATCHER.

"It's about 11 years now since I handled trains by wire, and I would not go back to it for \$100 a day. You have some idea of how it wears on a man. Some steady ones are nervous or later."

"When I was a dispatching engineer on this road, I thought I was the biggest man in Missouri. I took to smoking 18 cent cigars and wearing 18 hats. I had a well developed case of swollen head and showed it all over me. A few months' experience with faithful operators, tricky trainmen and arrogant superiors, however, took the conceit out of me, and I began to realize just how big a job it was to handle a heavy train and give satisfaction. The fact is, the man who can please all hands has yet to be born. There are times when some train must be delayed, and it's often a case of Holsten's choice. The trainmen who wait curse the dispatcher into the middle of purgatory and back again, and those who get advantage brag about the run they made."

"One night the road was fairly hot with trains when I came on duty. I remember how in shudder I should get the passenger train through without delay. There seemed to be a train on every side track over the whole length of the road and more between stations. I worked like a beaver. It was in the old days of what are known as 'single orders', when each train received a separate order, which must be sent to each one concerned singly. You will easily see how in the rush of business a single order might be incorrectly transmitted and trains leave stations under conflicting orders, which would certainly bring them together unless corrected. Nowadays the most progressive roads all use orders so worded that two trains or more receive them at the same time, and thus the risk of error is lessened. That system was hardly known in my time, and we worked on the perilous single order plan."

"A double header left the foot of the mountain about midnight, holding an order giving it the right to Summit. About 25 minutes ahead of it was a fast freight. The latter had an engine numbered 497, and the double header engines 349 and 357. You must remember I was working every minute trying to keep the freight out of the way of the night passenger trains."

"Along toward morning a train was ready to go down the mountain, and I gave the order to 'run wild' and wait for engine 497 at Summit. In some way or other the double train following slipped my memory completely. I have thought since I must have got mixed on the two numbers, 497 and 357. At any rate, when the operator at Summit reported the two trains leaving, it came over me with the suddenness and pain of a galvanic shock that I had given the order to 'run wild'."

"The horrible feeling that seized me often makes me shudder when I think of it now. My hand fell from the key, limp and nerveless. Something seemed to catch a blur before my eyes so I could not read the orders before me. The blood rushed to my head, and my temples beat like trip hammers. But only for a second. Like a flash I seized the key and asked the operator to stop the down train. It was too late. It had gone. Then I tried to reach the double train, but it, too, had passed the last telegraph office, and I knew no earthly power could prevent them from striking head on for the grade is nearly 20 feet to the mile up there."

"I sent for the chief dispatcher immediately and told him the situation. He was an old hand at the business, and an affair of this kind fretted his nerves almost to the point of insanity. He added nearly 100 per cent to my agony of mind. He would sit down and look the train sheet over and seem to devour the fatal orders with his eyes, then jump up with a gasp of despair and say, 'By gosh, that's too bad! Then he would pace up and down the floor, repeating to himself: 'That's too bad, too bad. They'll strike as sure as the world,' returning always to pore over the train sheet and order book. I could have sworn with the awful strain of nervous suspense. I confidently believe that nothing but lack of courage and the curious fascination kept me from rushing out and jumping into the river, 75 feet below."

"I felt absolutely certain that some of those men would be killed. Had both trains been single the drivers might possibly see each other's headlights in time to stop, but I was sure when on the second engine of the double header would go into the wreck all over and die as sure as fate. It has become fashionable nowadays to disbelieve in a physical hereafter. I don't know anything about that, but I do know that if mental torture be the lot of those who sin in this life, after our accounts are audited, I should prefer to take my chances with the old fashioned style of punishment."

"Suddenly both relays opened with a snap. The chief looked at me with a perfectly indescribable expression and went to the switchboard and threw the circuit on the switch without telling what it meant. The trains had struck, and the piled up wreckage had broken the wires down. We tested for the break and soon located it half way up the mountain. I gave up the last particle of hope at this, and only waited in a kind of dull wonder to learn the extent of the disaster."

"The 30 or 40 minutes that elapsed after the wire failed until we got the official report of the accident seem to me now as misty as a dream. I worked away at the wire mechanically, guided only by the force of habit, and not the circuit as they were made up by the chief. He kept fussing at the switchboard in a perfect misery of nervousness."

"At length the Summit operator called, and my heart beat almost audibly as I answered him, for I knew from his tremulous sending that he had received the report. I think he must have understood my feelings, for the first words he telegraphed almost crashed me with gratification. Before sending a line of the formal report he told me, 'There's nobody hurt! I gave up right then and there and said: 'Mr. H., you'll have to take the rest of this report. I can't,' and went up and went home."

"It seems the engineer had seen the headlight and jumped, and the men on the first engine of the double header, after giving a sharp whistle for brakes, shrieked in the following crew to jump and kept on shrieking after they struck the ground and until the engine passed them. The warning was heard in time, and all hands got off with nothing worse than a few bruises, but that finished my train dispatching."

—New York Advertiser.

Had Tried Them.

Little Dot—Mamma read in a paper that a dead man was being buried by a sexton of bees, and now he can hang as well as ever.

Little Dick—I don't see how bees things could make a dead man hear, but I should think they'd make a dumb man speak.

Good News.

Buried to Her Best Friend.

Being buried in a seakins sack is not half so droll as the Boston woman ordering she should wear a certain particularly becoming bonnet on her last journey, an order, too, that was religiously carried out by her family when the time came for burial. —Boston Journal.

A Postal Order is Safer.

In sending money in a letter, if it is folded inside a card, likewise folded, there is very little danger of even the practiced finger tips of the postoffice clerk discovering its presence in the envelope.

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